AMAR CHITRA KATHA

PRAHLAD

A TALE OF DEVOTION FROM THE BHAGAWAT PURANA

Vol 537

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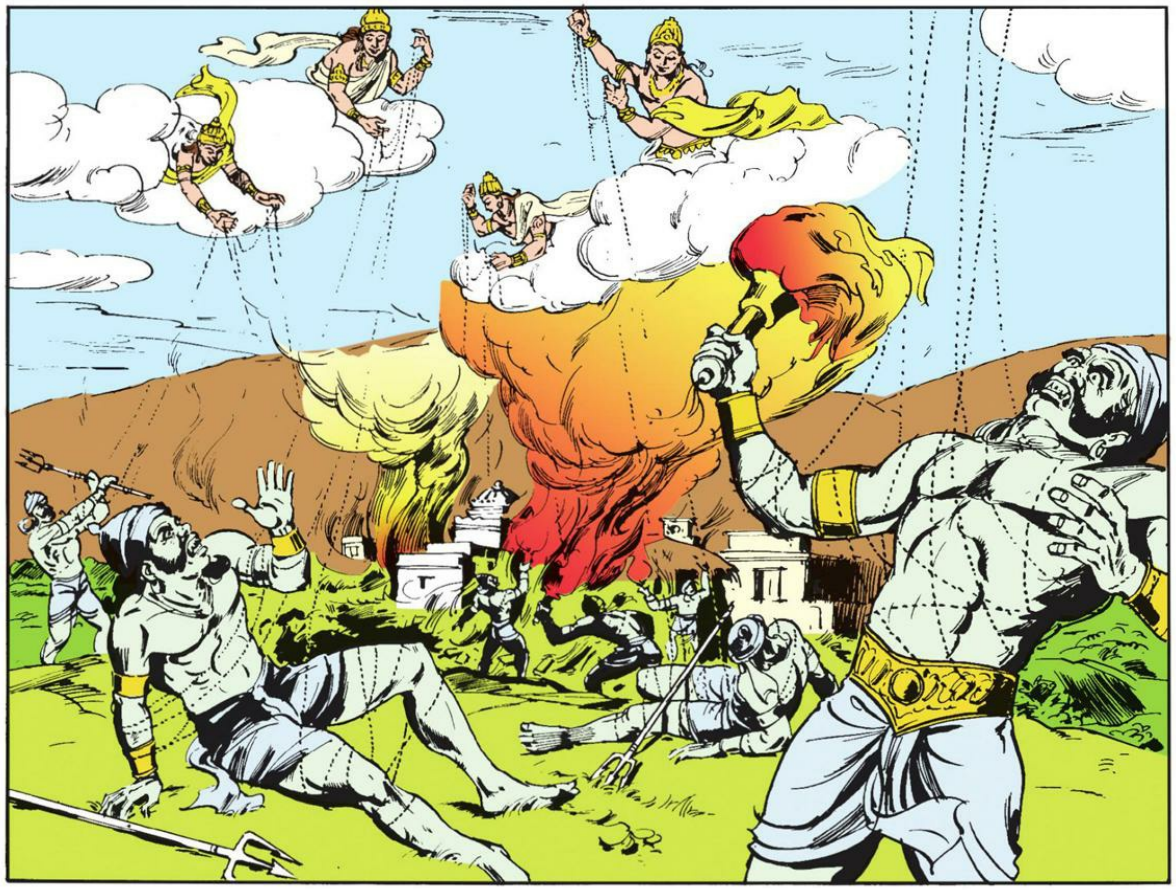
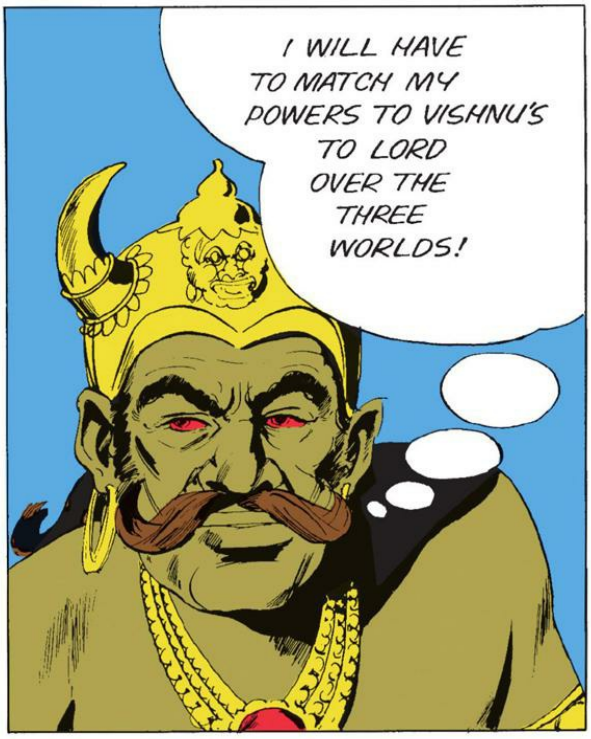
PRAHLAD
PRAHLAD WAS THE SON OF THE ASURA, HIRANYAKASHIPU.

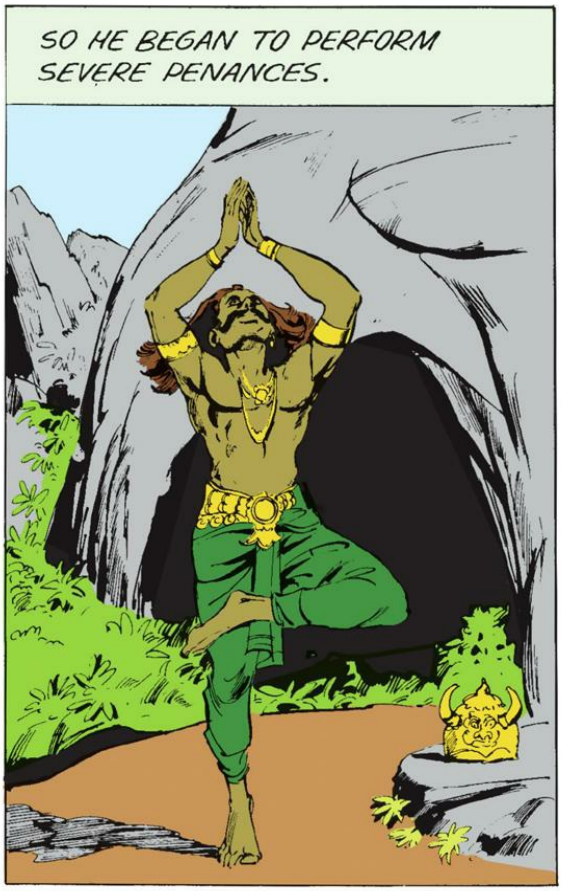
HIRANYAKASHIPU'S BROTHER HIRANYAKSHA HAD BEEN SLAIN BY VISHNU.
O BROTHER ASURAS! I SHALL DESTROY VISHNU AND KEEP THE OTHER GODS IN HEAVEN SUBDUED.
GO TO EARTH, MY BROTHERS, AND CRUSH ALL THOSE WHO WORSHIP VISHNU.
THE ASURAS, BY NATURE FOND OF OPPRESSING OTHERS, JOYFULLY OBEYED THE COMMAND.

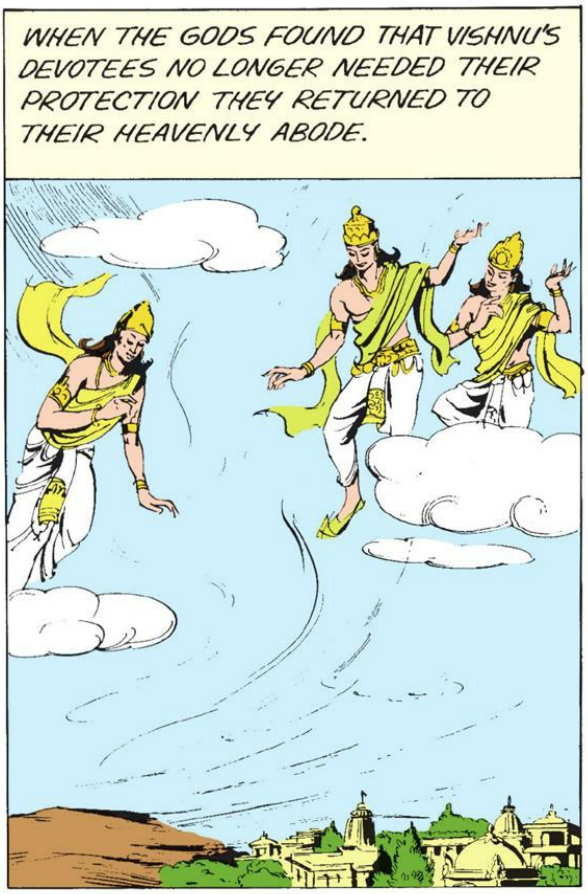
WHILE THE ASURAS WERE BUSY HARASSING THE DEVOTEES OF VISHNU, THE GODS WENT ABOUT PROTECTING THEM.

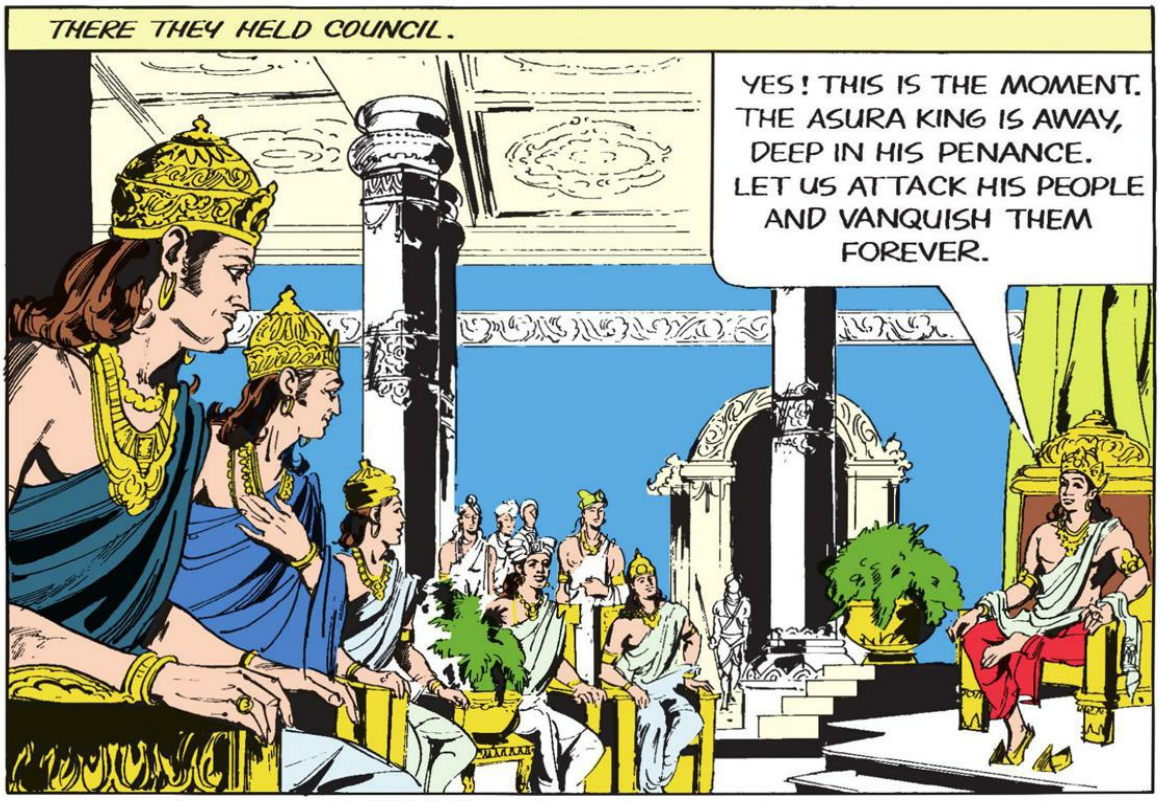


THE ASURAS RETURNED TO HIRANYAKASHIPU.
LORD! WE CANNOT CARRY OUT YOUR ORDERS. THE SERVANTS OF VISHNU THWART OUR EFFORTS.


I WILL HAVE TO MATCH MY POWERS TO VISHNU'S TO LORD OVER THE THREE WORLDS!

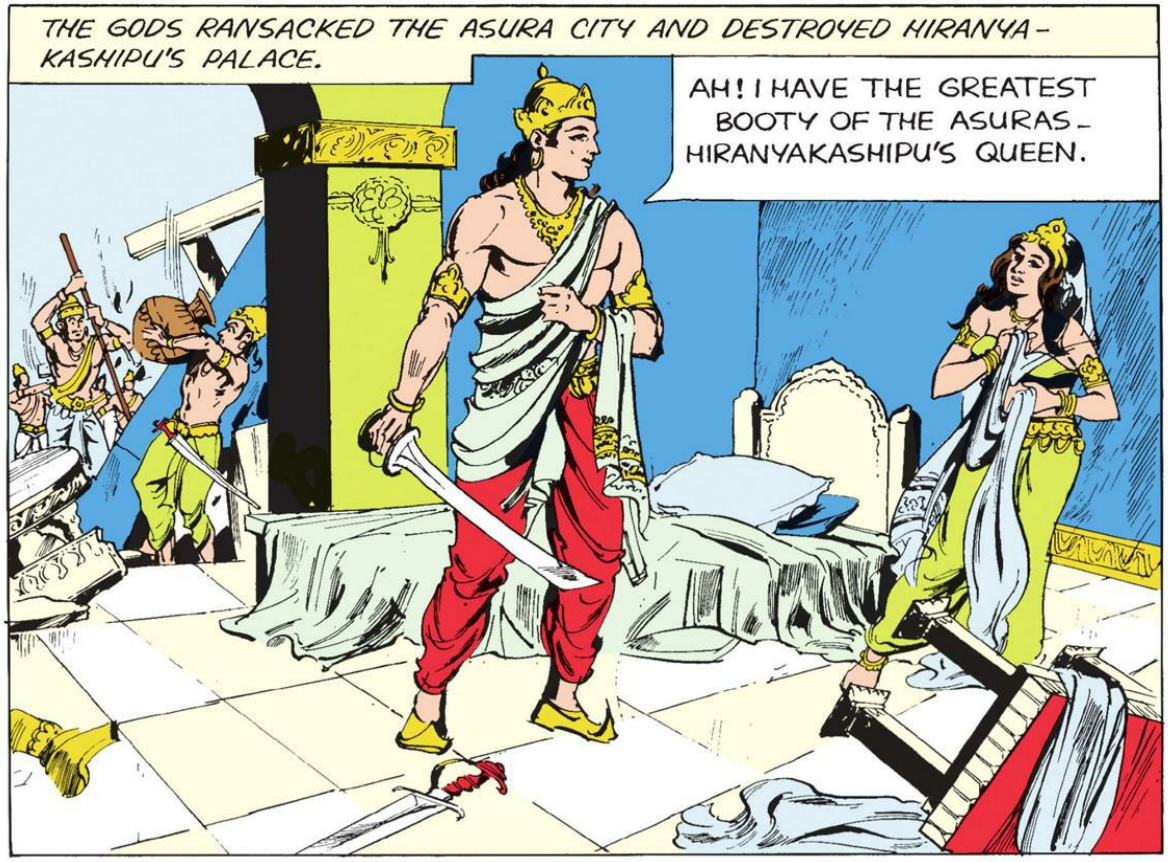

SO HE BEGAN TO PERFORM SEVERE PENANCES.

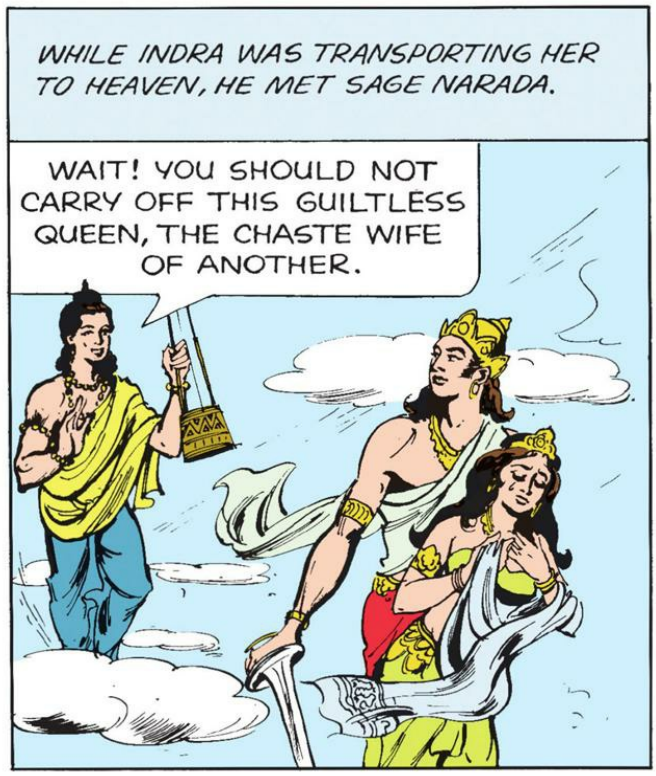

WHEN THE GODS FOUND THAT VISHNU'S DEVOTEES NO LONGER NEEDED THEIR PROTECTION THEY RETURNED TO THEIR HEAVENLY ABODE.


THERE THEY HELD COUNCIL.
YES! THIS IS THE MOMENT. THE ASURA KING IS AWAY, DEEP IN HIS PENANCE. LET US ATTACK HIS PEOPLE AND VANQUISH THEM FOREVER.

THE ASURAS WERE PANIC-STRICKEN.
THE GODS ARE PLANNING TO ATTACK US. WITHOUT OUR LORD WE ARE HELPLESS.
FLEE!
FLEE!

IN THEIR HASTE AND ANXIETY TO SAVE THEIR OWN LIVES, THEY DID NOT BOTHER TO TAKE EVEN THEIR WIVES, CATTLE OR MONEY.
WAIT!
DO NOT LEAVE US BEHIND!

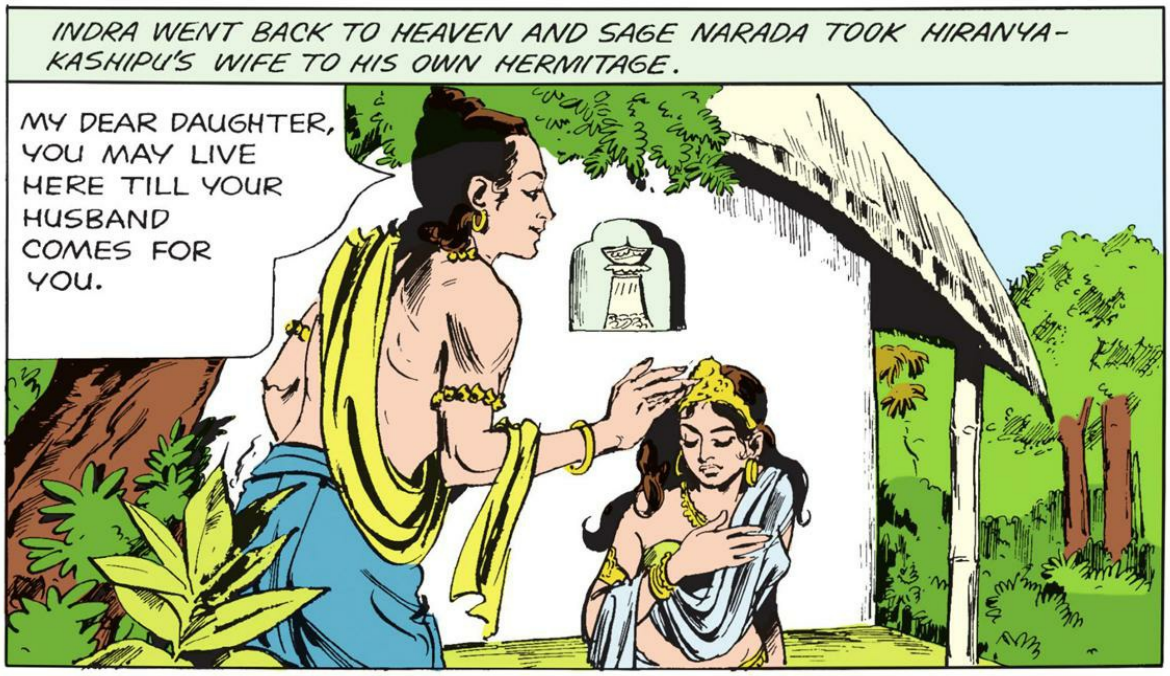

THE GODS RANSACKED THE ASURA CITY AND DESTROYED HIRANYA-KASHIPU'S PALACE.
AH! I HAVE THE GREATEST BOOTY OF THE ASURAS - HIRANYAKASHIPU'S QUEEN.


WHILE INDRA WAS TRANSPORTING HER TO HEAVEN, HE MET SAGE NARADA.
WAIT! YOU SHOULD NOT CARRY OFF THIS GUILTLESS QUEEN, THE CHASTE WIFE OF ANOTHER.

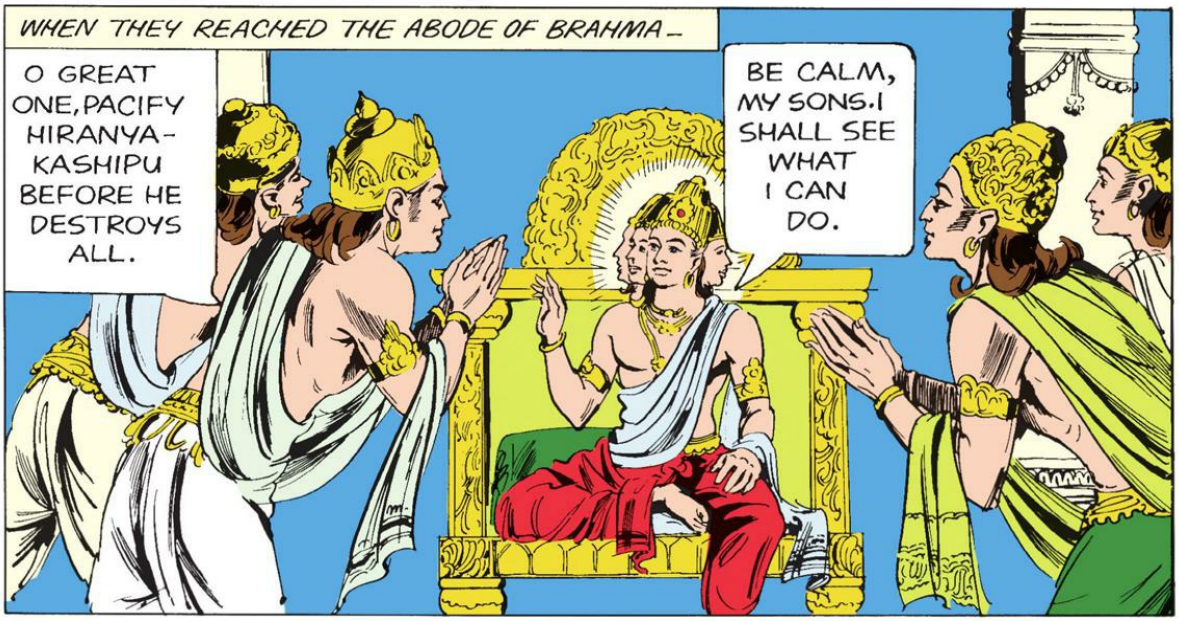
SHE IS GOING TO BE THE MOTHER OF HIRANYA-KASHIPU'S SON. SHE SHALL BE WITH ME TILL THE CHILD IS BORN!

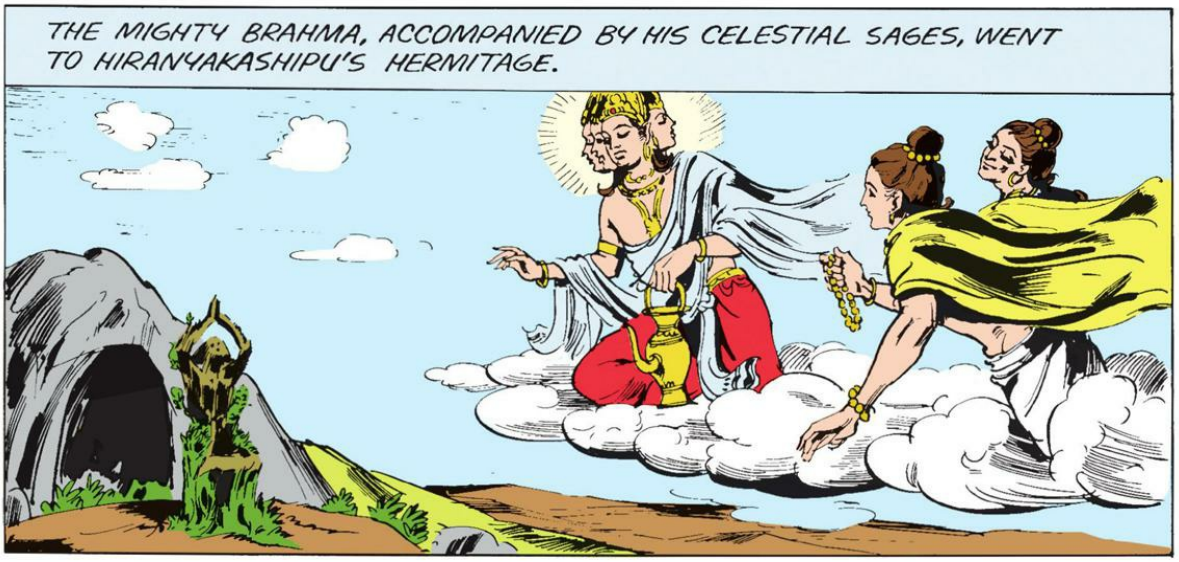
ONCE THE CHILD IS BORN AND I HAVE SLAIN IT, I SHALL LET HER GO.
BUT THE CHILD, PRAHLAD, IN HER, IS NOT LIKE THE FATHER. HE IS DESTINED TO BE DIFFER-ENT AND GREAT.

BESIDES HE WILL BE A DEVOTEE OF VISHNU AND IS NOT DESTINED TO DIE AT YOUR HANDS.
I ACCEPT YOUR WORDS O HONOURED SAGE. HIRANYAKASHIPU'S QUEEN IS FREE TO GO WHERE SHE PLEASES.

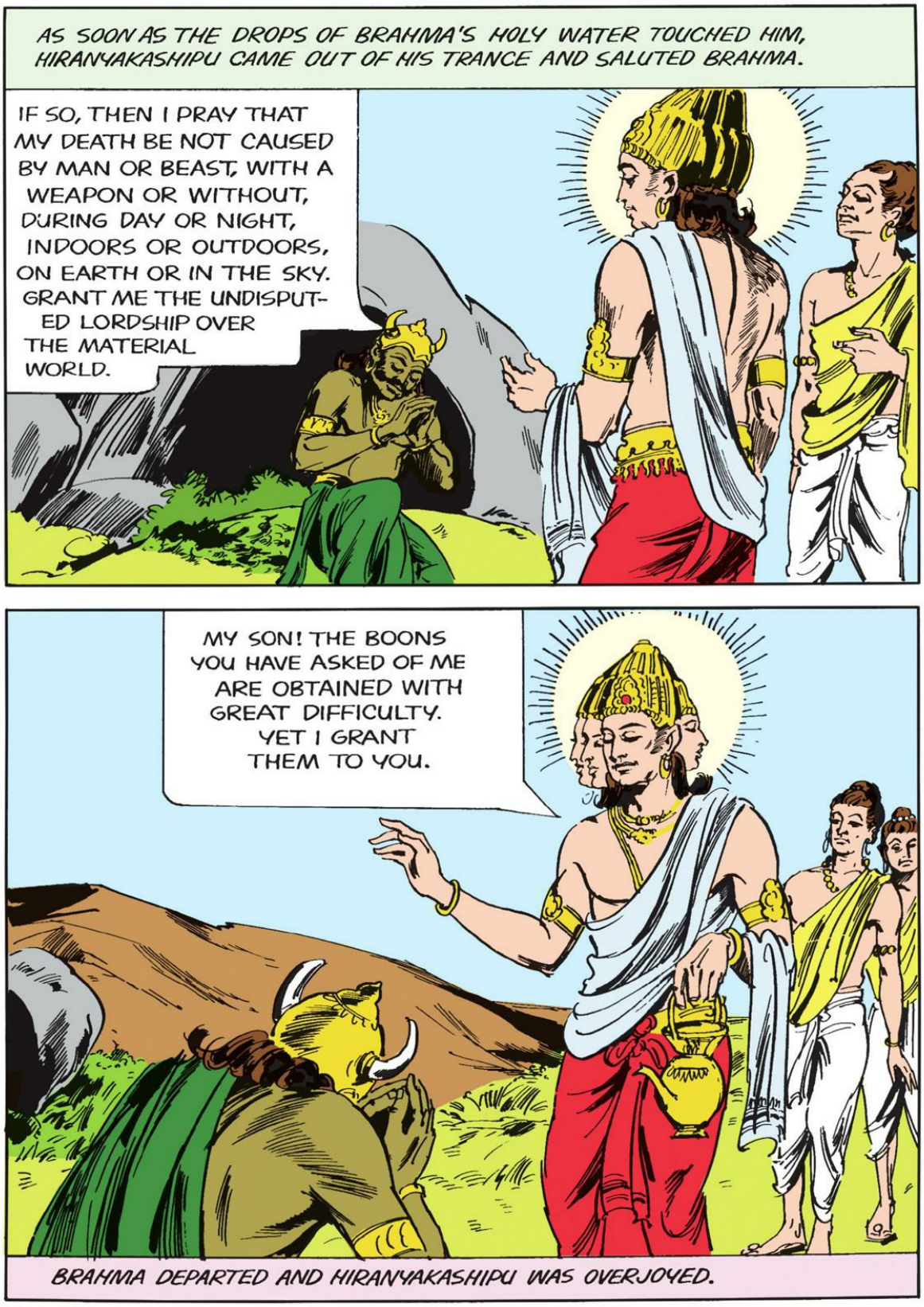

INDRA WENT BACK TO HEAVEN AND SAGE NARADA TOOK HIRANYA-KASHIPU'S WIFE TO HIS OWN HERMITAGE.
MY DEAR DAUGHTER, YOU MAY LIVE HERE TILL YOUR HUSBAND COMES FOR YOU.

SHE LIVED IN THE ASHRAM OF THE GREAT SAGE AND LEARNED ABOUT RELIGION AND THE GLORY OF VISHNU FROM HIM. THE CHILD WITHIN HER, PRAHLAD, TOO, ABSORBED ALL THIS KNOWLEDGE.
VISHNU IS THE SOUL OF ALL CREATED THINGS AND IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE.
IN THE MEANWHILE, WHEN INDRA REACHED HEAVEN—
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
HIRANYAKASHIPU'S AUSTERITIES ARE SCORCHING THE THREE WORLDS.
QUICK! LET US GO TO BRAHMA, OUR CREATOR.


WHEN THEY REACHED THE ABODE OF BRAHMA –
O GREAT ONE, PACIFY HIRANYA-KASHIPU BEFORE HE DESTROYS ALL.
BE CALM, MY SONS. I SHALL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.


THE MIGHTY BRAHMA, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS CELESTIAL SAGES, WENT TO HIRANYAKASHIPU'S HERMITAGE.

BRAHMA WAS ASTONISHED BY THE SIGHT.
ARISE HIRANYA-KASHIPU. ANY BOON THAT YOU ASK OF ME SHALL BE YOURS.


AS SOON AS THE DROPS OF BRAHMA'S HOLY WATER TOUCHED HIM, HIRANYAKASHIPU CAME OUT OF HIS TRANCE AND SALUTED BRAHMA.
IF SO, THEN I PRAY THAT MY DEATH BE NOT CAUSED BY MAN OR BEAST, WITH A WEAPON OR WITHOUT, DURING DAY OR NIGHT, INDOORS OR OUTDOORS, ON EARTH OR IN THE SKY. GRANT ME THE UNDISPUTED LORDSHIP OVER THE MATERIAL WORLD.
MY SON! THE BOONS YOU HAVE ASKED OF ME ARE OBTAINED WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY. YET I GRANT THEM TO YOU.
BRAHMA DEPARTED AND HIRANYAKASHIPU WAS OVERJOYED.

HIRANYAKASHIPU BROUGHT HIS WIFE BACK TO THEIR CITY WHERE PRAHLAD WAS BORN.

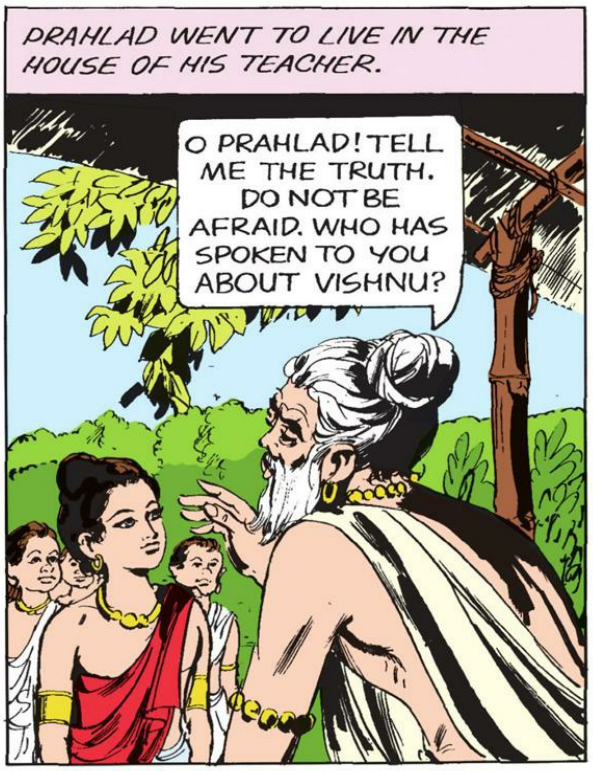
HIRANYAKASHIPU, WITH HIS NEW POWERS, RENEWED HIS HOSTILITIES AGAINST VISHNU AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

HE DROVE THE GODS OUT OF THEIR ABODE AND ESTABLISHED HIMSELF IN HEAVEN.

ALL THE GODS IN HEAVEN EXCEPT BRAHMA, VISHNU AND SHIVA, BEGAN TO WORSHIP THE INTOXICATED HIRANYAKASHIPU.
GOOD! YOU ARE WISE TO WORSHIP ME; OR IS IT FEAR THAT I MIGHT SLAY YOU OTHERWISE?
AT LAST THE OPPRESSED GODS AND DEVOTEES OF VISHNU APPEALED TO HIM.
O LORD, WE SHALL FOREGO SLEEP AND LIVE ONLY ON AIR TILL YOU COME TO OUR AID.
AFTER A FEW DAYS...
DO NOT BE AFRAID! I WILL PUT AN END TO THE OPPRESSION OF HIRANYAKASHIPU. I WILL SLAY HIM WHEN HE BEGINS TO PERSECUTE HIS OWN SON, THE HIGH-SOULED, PEACE-LOVING PRAHLAD.
THE CELESTIALS WENT AWAY CONSIDERING THE ASURAS AS ALREADY VANQUISHED.

PRAHLAD IN THE MEANWHILE WAS GROWING UP AND WAS HIRANYAKASHIPU'S DELIGHT. ONE DAY—
DEAR SON! TELL ME. WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BEST THING IN LIFE?
TO RENOUNCE THE WORLD AND SEEK REFUGE IN VISHNU.

HIRANYAKASHIPU LAUGHED. THEN HE CALLED HIS SON'S TEACHER TO HIM.
GUARD HIM CLOSELY. I THINK THAT THE FOLLOWERS OF VISHNU ARE SECRETLY INFLUENCING HIM. DON'T LET HIM OUT OF YOUR SIGHT.


PRAHLAD WENT TO LIVE IN THE HOUSE OF HIS TEACHER.
O PRAHLAD! TELL ME THE TRUTH. DO NOT BE AFRAID. WHO HAS SPOKEN TO YOU ABOUT VISHNU?

WHO BUT VISHNU HIMSELF. HE FILLS ME WITH THE KNOWLEDGE.
HIS TEACHER WAS FURIOUS.
WHERE IS THE CANE? THIS BOY MUST BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.
THIS WILL TEACH YOU NOT TO PRAISE VISHNU, THE SWORN ENEMY OF OUR PEOPLE.
AND SO THE DAYS PASSED.
I THINK YOU ARE NOW READY TO MEET YOUR FATHER.

THE TEACHER THEN SENT FOR PRAHLAD'S MOTHER.
ANOINT HIM WITH PERFUMES AND DECORATE HIM WITH ORNAMENTS. WE WISH TO PRESENT HIM BEFORE LORD HIRANYA-KASHIPU.
THE BEDECKED PRAHLAD WAS THEN LED TO HIRANYAKASHIPU.
O MY SON! MAY YOU LIVE LONG.

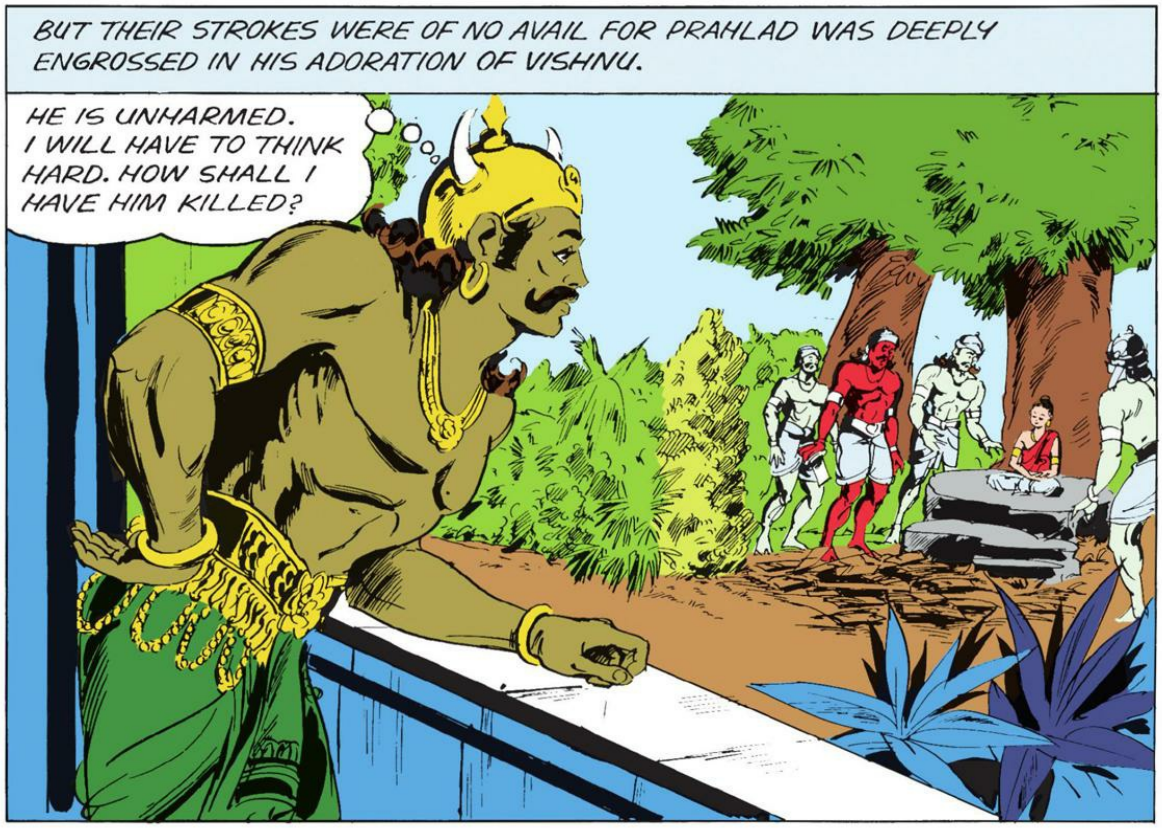
YOU HAVE BEEN WITH YOUR GURU A LONG TIME! WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT?
I HAVE LEARNT THAT THE MOST WORTHWHILE OCCUPATION FOR ANYONE IS THE WORSHIP OF LORD VISHNU.
YOU! A GURU? EXPLAIN!
!!
YOU WICKED ONE! YOU DARED TEACH HIM THAT THE WORSHIP OF MY WORST ENEMY IS THE BEST OCCUPATION!

O KING, DO NOT BE ANGRY. DO NOT BLAME ME.
WHAT YOUR SON REPEATS HAS NOT BEEN TAUGHT BY ME.
O CURSED CHILD, WHO TAUGHT YOU SUCH PERVERSE THINGS?
VISHNU. HE REVEALS HIMSELF TO ALL WHO ARE DEVOTED TO HIM.

THIS BOY MUST NOT LIVE. TAKE HIM AWAY. QUICK.

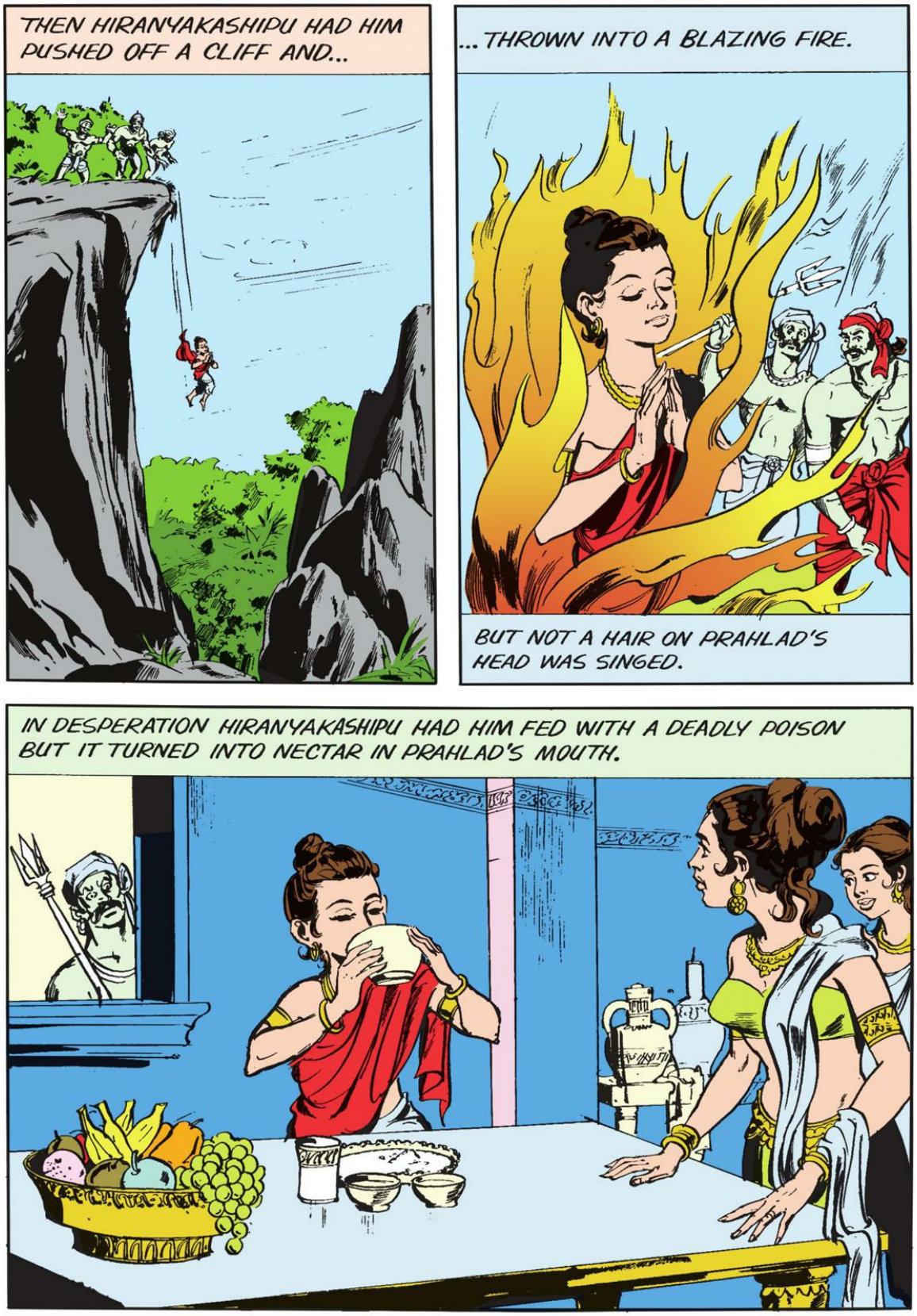
KILL THIS VILEST FOE DISGUISED AS MY SON. POISON HIM OR ATTACK HIM WHEN HE IS ASLEEP OR UNGUARDED. BUT KILL HIM.

THUS COMMANDED BY HIRANYAKASHIPU, THE ASURAS BEGAN TO ATTACK PRAHLAD.
KILL!
KILL!

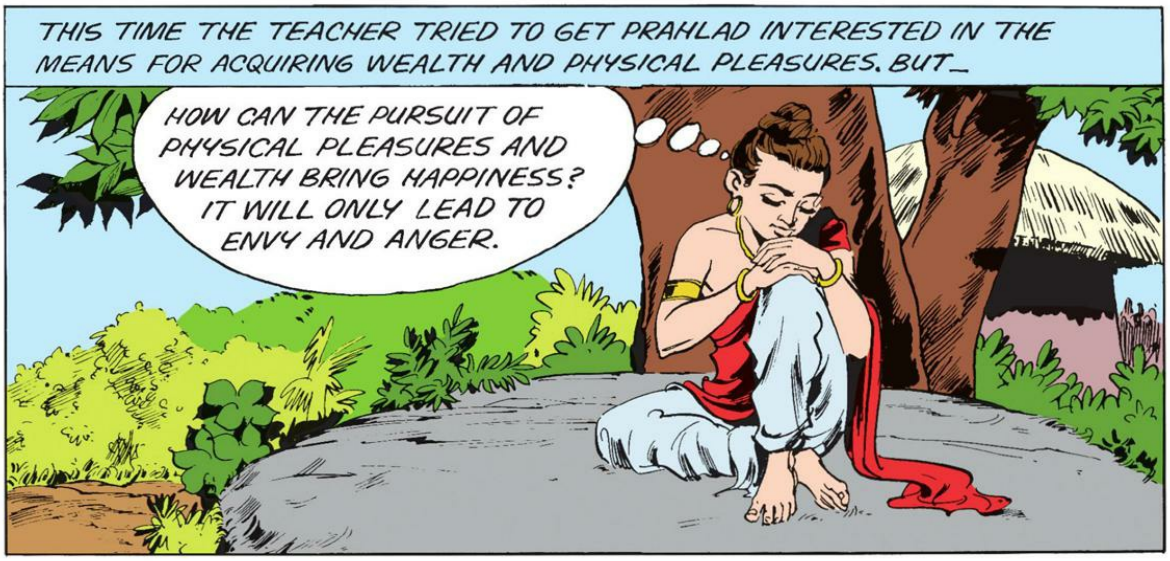

BUT THEIR STROKES WERE OF NO AVAIL FOR PRAHLAD WAS DEEPLY ENGROSSED IN HIS ADORATION OF VISHNU.
HE IS UNHARMED. I WILL HAVE TO THINK HARD. HOW SHALL I HAVE HIM KILLED?

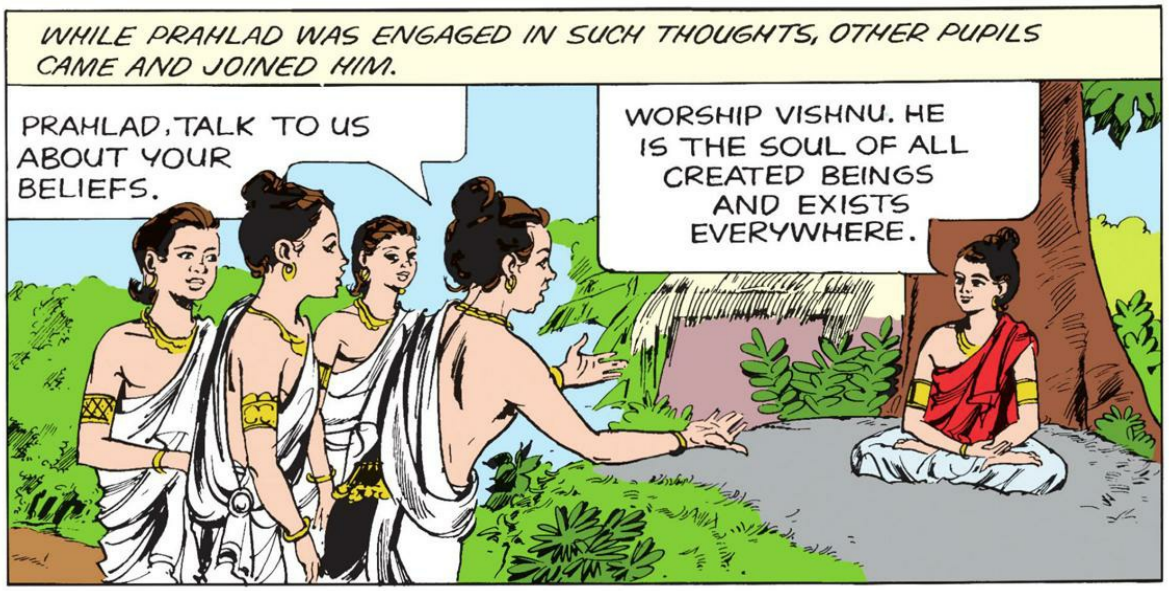
HIRANYAKASHIPU HAD THE MOST DEADLY SERPENTS BROUGHT. THEY WERE LET LOOSE ON PRAHLAD. BUT THEIR FANGS TURNED IMPOTENT.

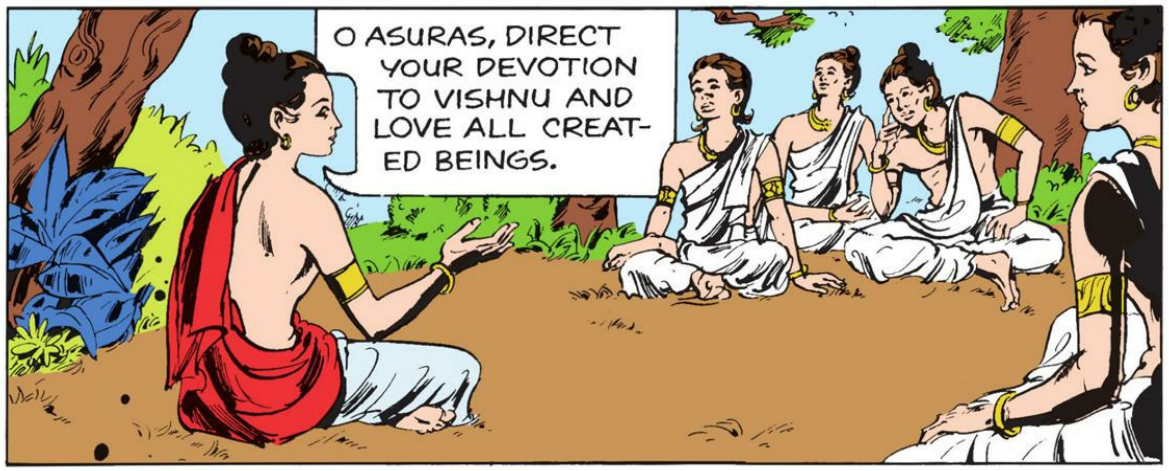
HIRANYAKASHIPU THEN CALLED FOR MIGHTY ELEPHANTS AND MADE THEM TRAMPLE UPON PRAHLAD. BUT ONCE AGAIN IT WAS THE ELEPHANTS THAT WERE INJURED.

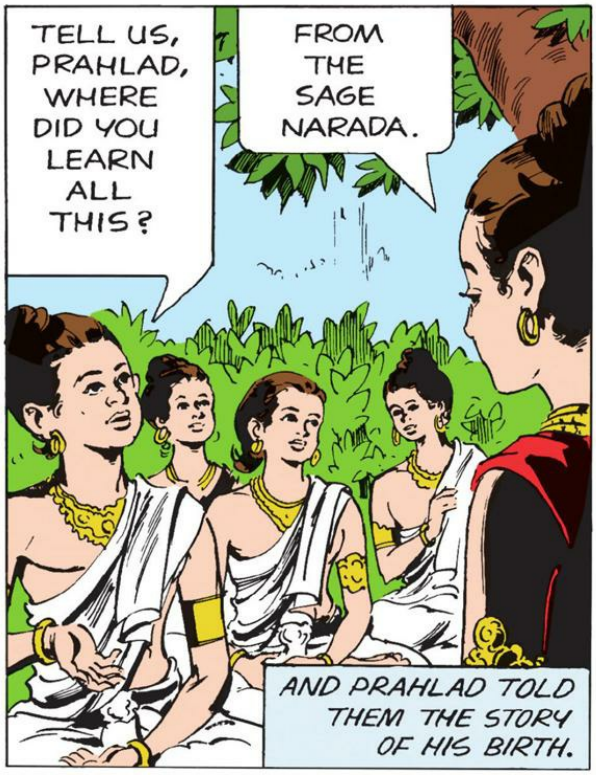

THEN HIRANYAKASHIPU HAD HIM PUSHED OFF A CLIFF AND...
...THROWN INTO A BLAZING FIRE.
BUT NOT A HAIR ON PRAHLAD'S HEAD WAS SINGED.
IN DESPERATION HIRANYAKASHIPU HAD HIM FED WITH A DEADLY POISON BUT IT TURNED INTO NECTAR IN PRAHLAD'S MOUTH.

INCREDIBLE! HAS DEATH NO STING FOR HIM?
HE IS IMMORTAL AND FEARS NOTHING.
WILL HE BE THE CAUSE OF MY DEATH?
AS HIRANYAKASHIPU SAT BROODING, PRAHLAD'S TEACHER CAME TO SEE HIM.
WE'LL TRY AGAIN, MY LORD!
ALL RIGHT! TAKE THE BOY BACK AND SEE WHAT YOU CAN DO.

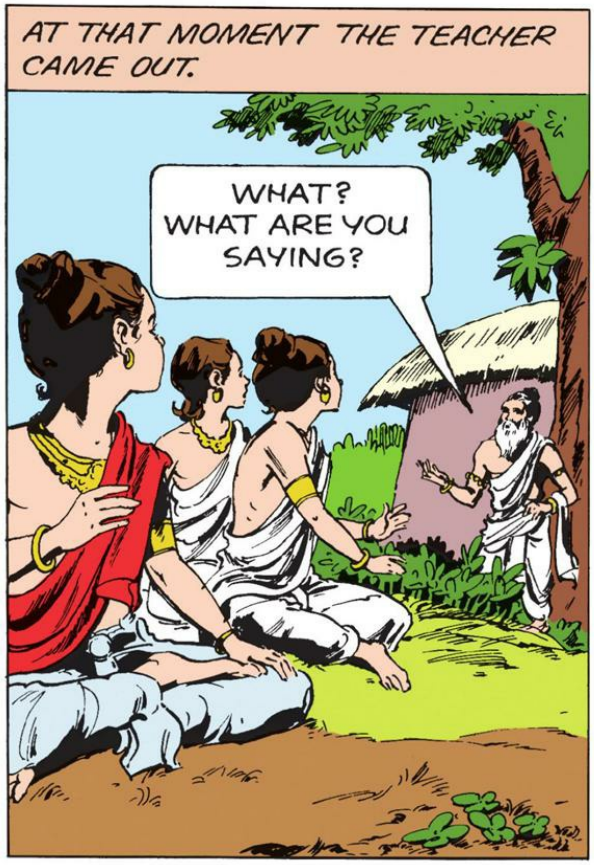

THIS TIME THE TEACHER TRIED TO GET PRAHLAD INTERESTED IN THE MEANS FOR ACQUIRING WEALTH AND PHYSICAL PLEASURES. BUT_
HOW CAN THE PURSUIT OF PHYSICAL PLEASURES AND WEALTH BRING HAPPINESS? IT WILL ONLY LEAD TO ENVY AND ANGER.


WHILE PRAHLAD WAS ENGAGED IN SUCH THOUGHTS, OTHER PUPILS CAME AND JOINED HIM.
PRAHLAD, TALK TO US ABOUT YOUR BELIEFS.
WORSHIP VISHNU. HE IS THE SOUL OF ALL CREATED BEINGS AND EXISTS EVERYWHERE.


O ASURAS, DIRECT YOUR DEVOTION TO VISHNU AND LOVE ALL CREATED BEINGS.


TELL US, PRAHLAD, WHERE DID YOU LEARN ALL THIS?
FROM THE SAGE NARADA.
AND PRAHLAD TOLD THEM THE STORY OF HIS BIRTH.

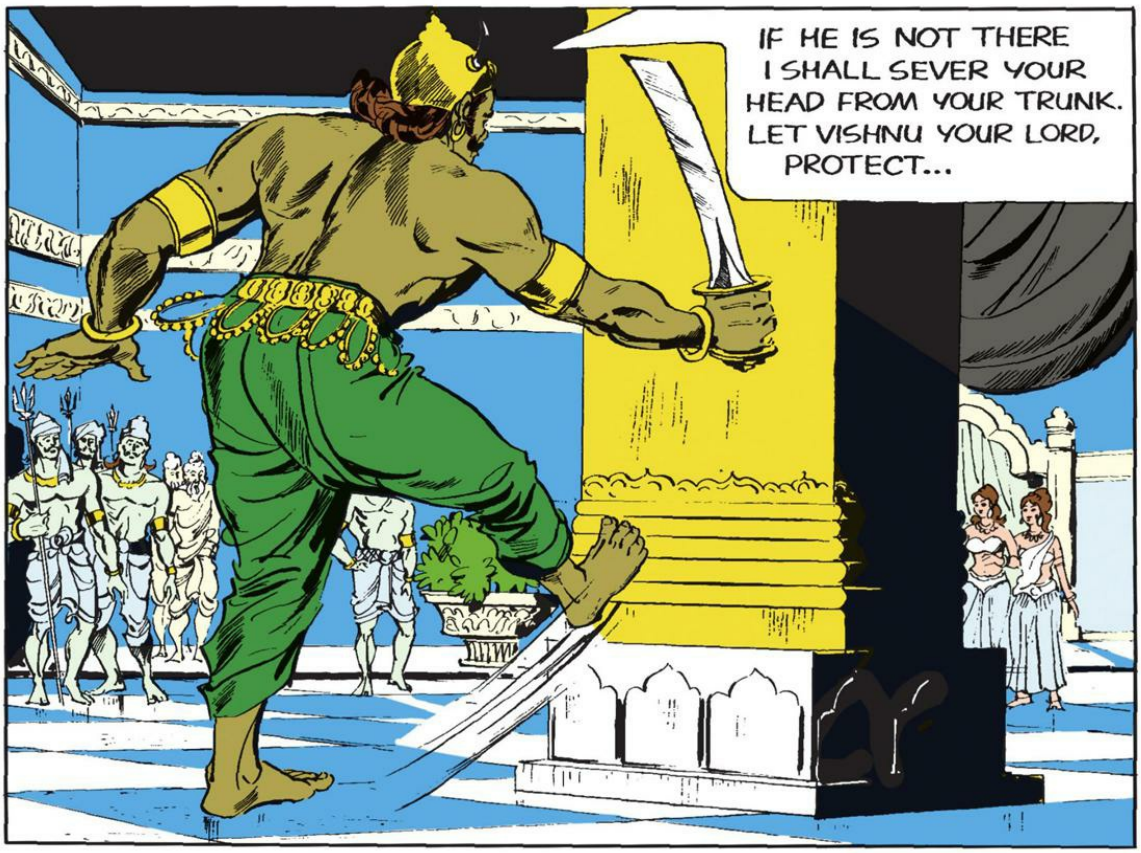
THE ASURA LADS LISTENED TO PRAHLAD AND ACCEPTED ALL HIS TEACHINGS.
WHAT OUR GURU HAS TAUGHT US IS NOT TRUE.
VISHNU IS THE SOUL...

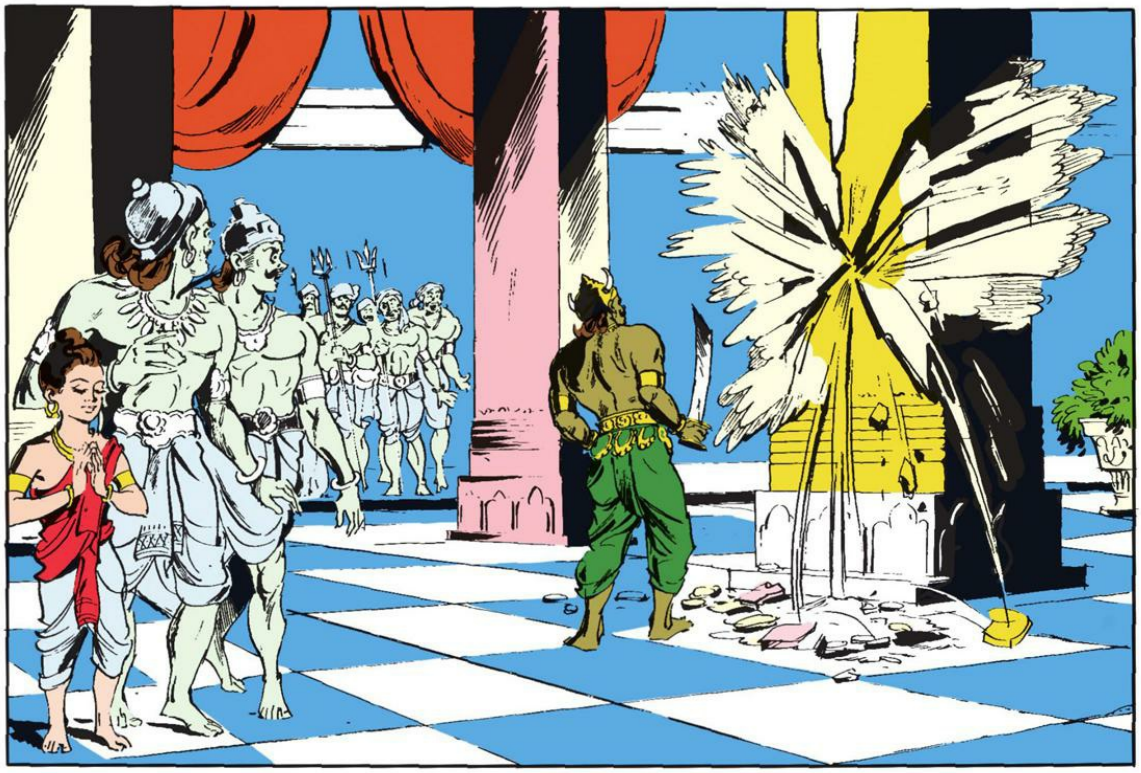

AT THAT MOMENT THE TEACHER CAME OUT.
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?

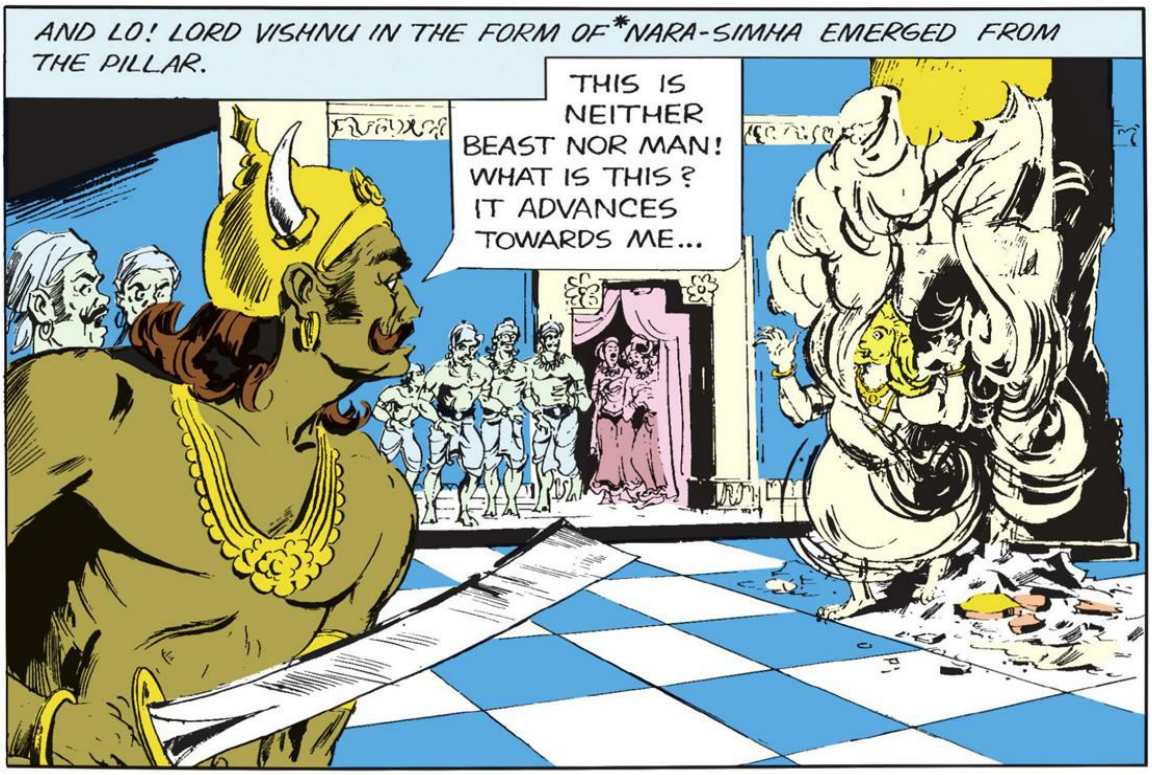
THAT VISHNU IS THE SOUL OF ALL CREATED BEINGS AND IS PRESENT EVERYWHERE.

THE TEACHER WENT STRAIGHT TO HIRANYAKASHIPU.
O LORD, WE MUST DO SOMETHING BEFORE ANY MORE HARM IS DONE.
YOUR SON IS SPREADING HIS VILE BELIEFS AMONG MY PUPILS!
HIRANYAKASHIPU SENT FOR PRAHLAD.
YOU WICKED WRETCH! ARE YOU TRYING TO DESTROY ME AND MY RACE?

THE RULERS OF THE THREE WORLDS QUAKE BEFORE ME. BUT SPEAK UP, WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF YOUR POWER?
O FATHER! IT IS LORD VISHNU. HE IS THE SOURCE NOT ONLY OF MY POWER, BUT OF YOURS TOO AND OF ALL OTHER POWERFUL BEINGS!
IT IS OBVIOUS THAT YOU WISH TO DIE.
WHERE IS HE? IF HE IS EVERYWHERE WHY IS HE NOT IN THIS PILLAR?

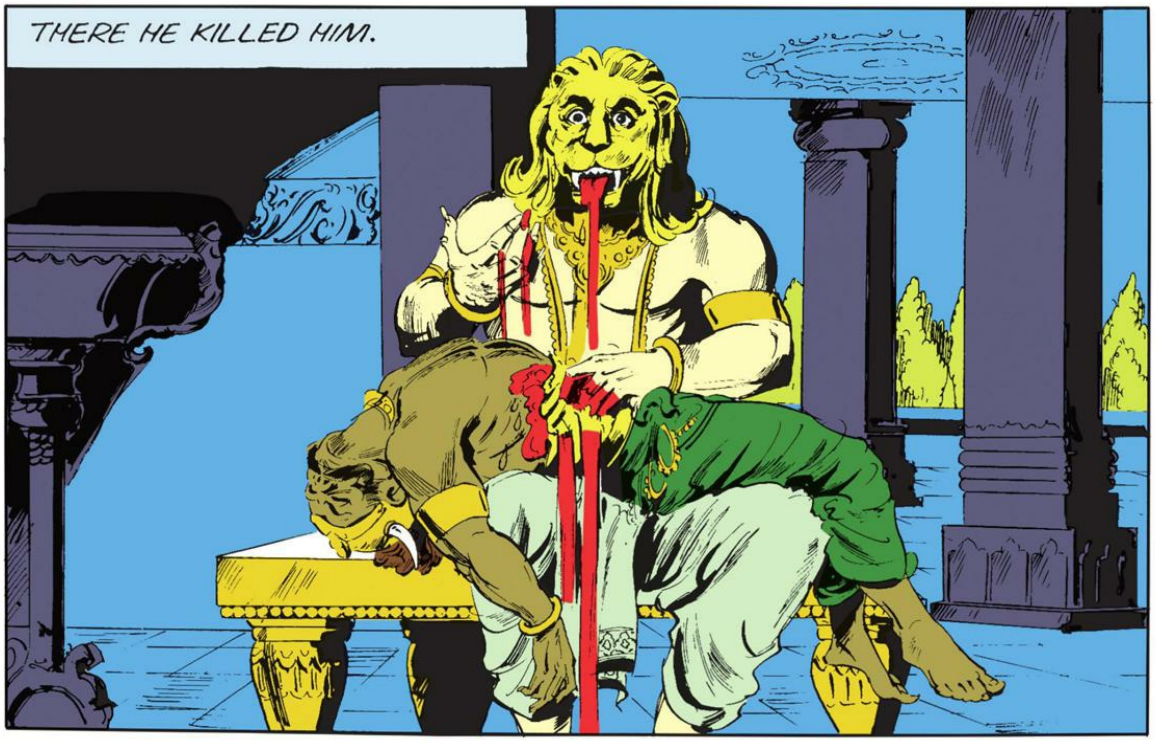

IF HE IS NOT THERE I SHALL SEVER YOUR HEAD FROM YOUR TRUNK. LET VISHNU YOUR LORD, PROTECT...

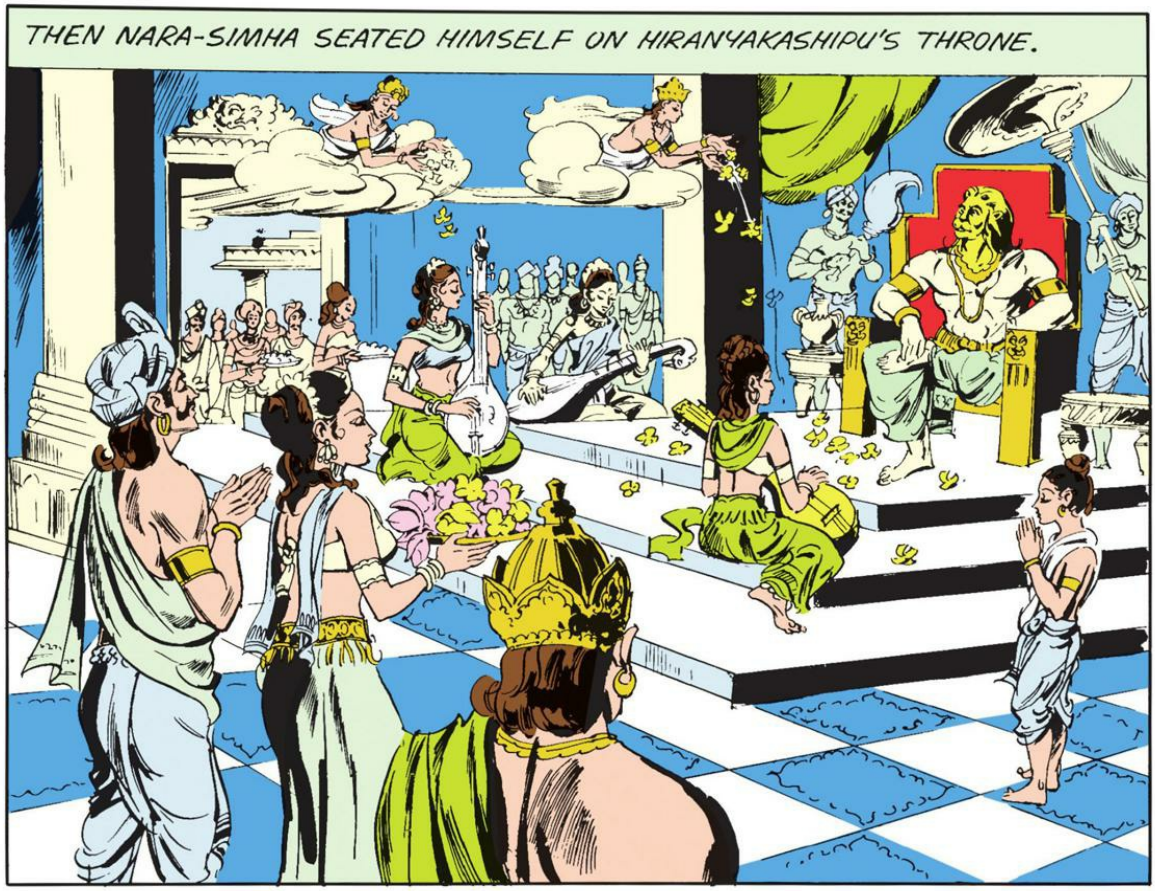



AND LO! LORD VISHNU IN THE FORM OF *NARA-SIMHA EMERGED FROM THE PILLAR.
THIS IS NEITHER BEAST NOR MAN! WHAT IS THIS? IT ADVANCES TOWARDS ME...

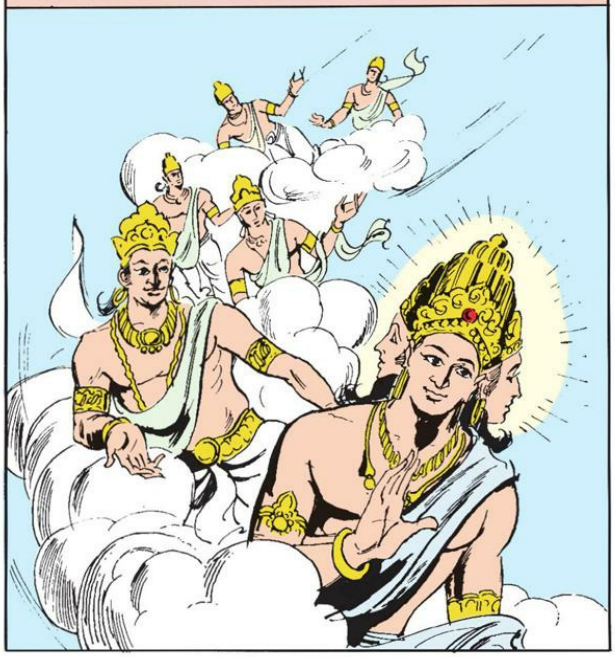
NARA-SIMHA CAUGHT HIRANYA-KASHIPU AND...
IT IS THE TWILIGHT HOUR. I AM DOOMED.

...CARRIED HIM TO THE THRESHOLD OF THE COURTROOM.
ALAS WE ARE NEITHER INDOORS NOR OUTDOORS.


THERE HE KILLED HIM.

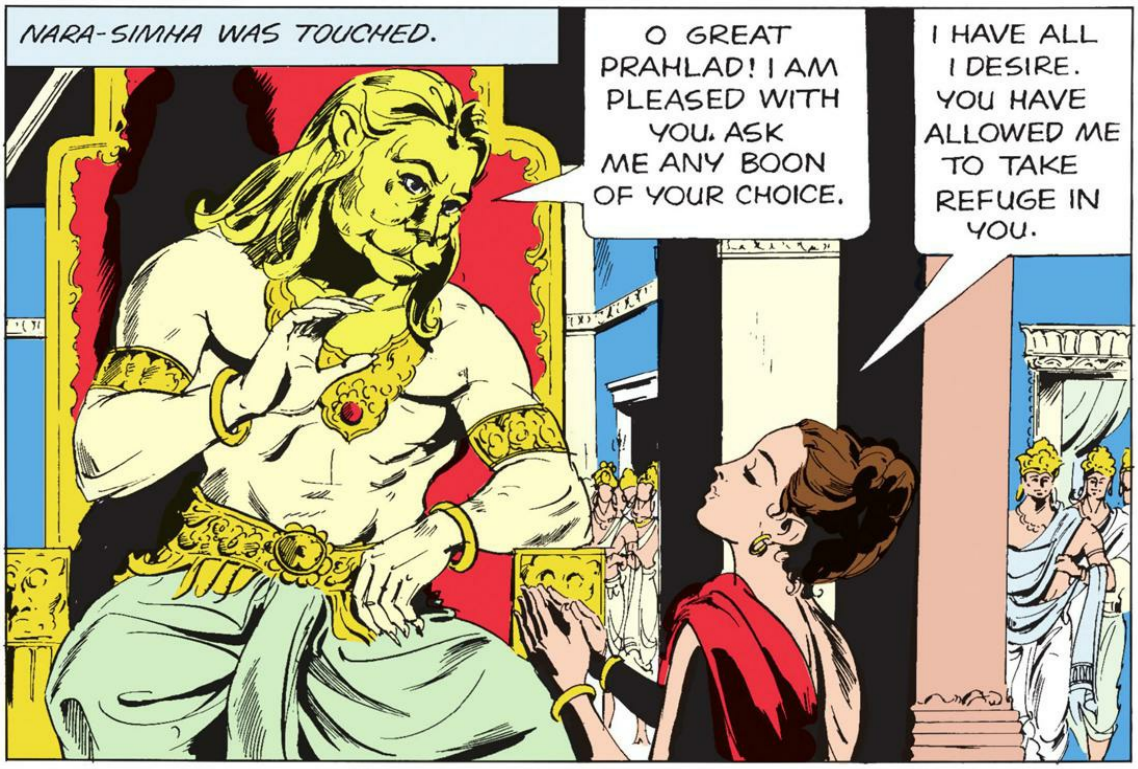

THEN NARA-SIMHA SEATED HIMSELF ON HIRANYAKASHIPU'S THRONE.

BRAHMA AND INDRA CAME TO PAY HOMAGE TO HIM.



BUT WERE WARY OF APPROACHING VISHNU IN THIS TERRIFYING ASPECT.

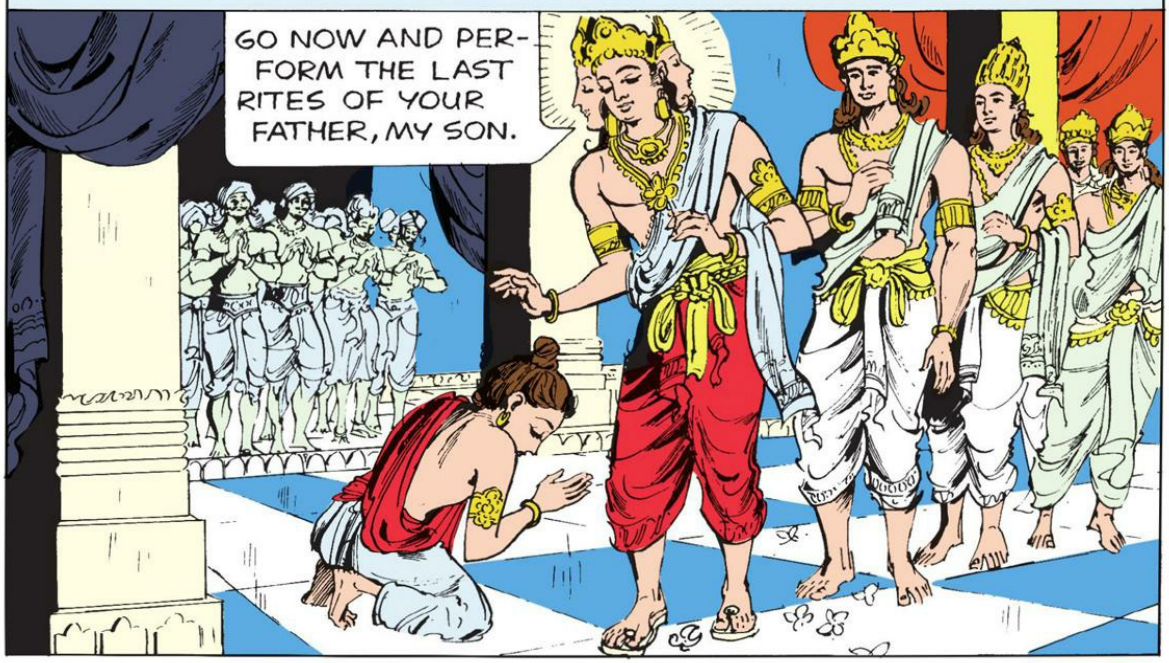
THEN BRAHMA WENT TO PRAHLAD WHO WAS STANDING NEARBY.


NARA-SIMHA WAS TOUCHED.
O GREAT PRAHLAD! I AM PLEASED WITH YOU. ASK ME ANY BOON OF YOUR CHOICE.
I HAVE ALL I DESIRE. YOU HAVE ALLOWED ME TO TAKE REFUGE IN YOU.

BUT NARA-SIMHA INSISTED.
YET I WISH TO GRANT YOU A BOON.
THEN LET MY FATHER BE PURIFIED OF ALL HIS SINS.

BEING YOUR FATHER HE IS ALREADY PURIFIED. REIGN IN HIS PLACE AND DO YOUR DUTIES.
SO BE IT.

NARA-SIMHA VANISHED. AND PRAHLAD BOWED TO BRAHMA AND TO THE OTHER CELESTIALS.



AFTER THE LAST RITES OF HIS FATHER WERE OVER, THE GODS WITH THE HELP OF THE ASURAS INSTALLED PRAHLAD ON THE THRONE AS LORD OF THE ASURAS. AND HE RULED WISELY AND WELL FOR MANY YEARS.

WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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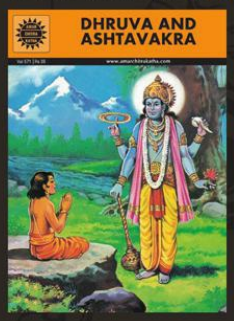

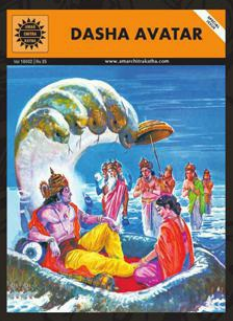

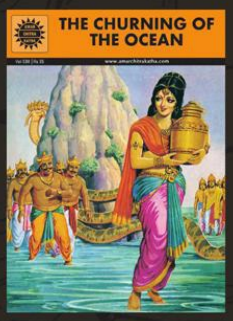

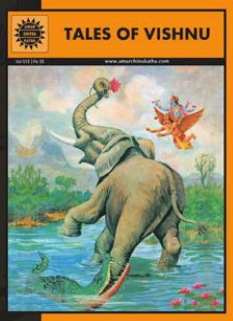

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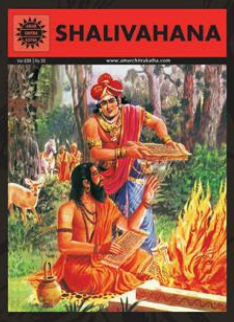

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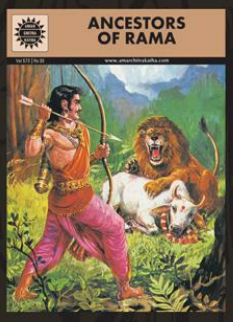

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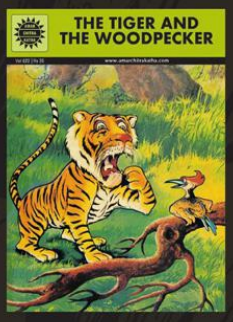

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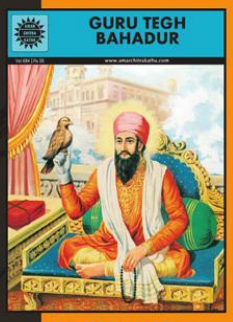

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